

Written by Ashley R. Carlson

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Travis Angry has been through a number of trials in his life, among them a troubled youth filled with bad decisions, two terms serving in the US Navy, a cancer diagnosis, divorce and single fatherhood to two children. Angry was able to prevail through these crises, finding a strength within himself that he knew should be shared with others. *If I Can, You Can* is a memoir of Angry's struggles, and AFM had the opportunity to discuss his upcoming book tour and what inspired him to embark on this journey. His first book signing is August 15 at 7 p.m. at Changing Hands Bookstore in Phoenix.

AFM: You mentioned on your website that you grew up in a strict household with caring parents, but didn't feel accepted in many ways during your youth. Can you tell us a little more about your childhood experiences and how they shaped the man you are today?

TA: Growing up in the South as a young man was tough for many reasons; being raised in the inner-city it can be tough to find your way around, and because I was lacking love and nurturing at home, it affected me a great deal, and I struggled.

Watching other kids receive the love I craved made me feel more isolated. I was the second child of four boys, and I was the one in the group that wanted, and needed, more attention. When I did not get it, I felt sad and rejected. This feeling of isolation and resentment would be a powerful force throughout my childhood. I would begin acting out on my pain and fears; I felt like no one cared, like no one was listening to me.

Searching for love became my number one focus during my teen years. Instead of being focused on my schoolwork, I was more focused on getting people's attention and wanting to be known. I would carry this hurt and search for love and attention into my middle school and high school years. I became a lost young man; I felt like I was in a foreign country with no map, and no way to get home. I had a bad attitude towards life, my family, and everyone who wouldn't give me what I thought I wanted.

While looking back it seems like a difficult and challenging childhood, it has provided me the strength and courage as an adult to face anything head-on that is placed before me, and the knowledge that I can overcome any obstacles in life.

AFM: Why was being incarcerated at the age of 25 such a turning point for you? Did you know then that being a motivational speaker might be in your future?

TA: It was the turning point for me. I was at crossroads in my life; my father refused to bail me out of jail, instead he made me sit in there. Though I was mad about that, I understood what he was doing. Growing up he worked hard to teach my brothers and I right from wrong, to be an

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honorable and good young men. He told us that if we did get in trouble with the law, he would not come and bail us out, and so there I sat. During this time I had the opportunity to reflect on my life, and I realized I was going down the wrong path and needed to make a change.

As a child, I was always very talkative. My dad was a minister, and watching him deliver sermons in church provided an additional foundation for me in my speaking. Speaking for me is natural, and I am inspired when I speak. At the age of 25, I did not foresee the amazing journey of my life that would unfold.

Once I was released from jail, I began to take the steps and make the right decisions to improve my life. It took several more years before I finally made the pivotal decision to join the United States Navy.

AFM: What gave you the idea for your book, *Change: If I Can, You Can*? How long had you been working on it before it was published?

TA: The idea for the book came to me in March of 2005. I was undergoing chemotherapy at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Downtown Phoenix, and I began to reflect on my past. I thought about the ups and downs of my life, my struggles as I searched for love, my bad attitude, how I dropped out of school, my life on the streets, and how I lived there for 11 years with no real direction. I reflected on our youth generation, and the social issues that they were going through, and I realized the strong connection between the path I had traveled, and the challenges they were facing.

I asked the nurse on duty for a piece of paper and a pen, and wrote down the words, *Change: If I Can, You Can*. I captured this moment in the preface of my book. I went on to write two columns on that piece of paper. In one column I wrote all of my negatives, and in the second column I wrote all of my positives.

Flash forward, and I started the journey of writing stories, then chapters, and finally a full manuscript. It took me seven years to write to complete the piece. During this time I faced more challenges, including a divorce, the passing of both of my parents, and the soul searching that goes with such loss. It was the flight home from my father's funeral, at 34,000 feet in the air, when I vowed to complete the manuscript—which of course, I did.

AFM: Why do you think it's a beneficial book for people to read?

TA: I feel my book is able to resonate with a wide variety of audiences, and provide encouragement and inspiration for anyone who is feeling defeated or lost. The overall message of hope is timeless and universal.

Specifically, our young people are battling an overwhelming number of social issues today. My story shares with them how I can understand and relate to them. For adults, to take strength and be inspired by the knowledge of what I have overcome, and know that they too can be a survivor. Essentially, that is ok for us all to start dreaming again.

I am a two-time cancer survivor, I proudly served our country twice, and now am a divorced single father of two. I went on to complete my education and graduate college. If I can, you can! We can make a difference in our communities and reach our young people by showing we care and using my story as a tool; we need to show our youth and our adults to reach for the stars and dream big. I know the Change Youth Project will be an asset to our community, because I am living the American Dream.

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AFM: What does the future hold for you and your book?

TA: I am excited about the national book tour, meeting families across the country and sharing my message of hope. Our tour launches on August 15 at Changing Hands Bookstore in Phoenix, and I invite everyone to come out and celebrate the start of this amazing journey. We have dates confirmed for California, Colorado and New Mexico... and hope to announce Texas and other states very shortly!

The rest of 2014/2015 will include speaking events at conferences and corporate events, and then the fun really begins.

We are excited for the book to be produced as a full-length film next year, and spread the message of the Change Youth Project through a major youth conference and expo in the fall of 2015. Of course there is even more that our team is busy working on, so our future looks great and I am ready!

AFM: If there is one message you'd like to leave readers with, what would it be?

TA: Take a timeout to reflect on who you are, why you are here, and what are you going to do about it. If you cannot find yourself, how can you find your way in life? Your life is valuable because of you are who you were created to be. Our young people need to understand that when they find their purpose, it will fulfill their life to the fullest.

"A life without discipline is a life without success." — Travis Angry

Following dates and locations for Angry's upcoming book signings are as follows:

August 15 at 7 p.m. at Changing Hands Bookstore, Phoenix

August 29 at 7 p.m. at Barnes & Noble, Chandler Mall location

September 20 at 3 p.m. at Barnes & Noble, Desert Ridge location

To learn more about Travis Angry and the upcoming book tour, go to: <http://travisangry.com/>.